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## Sparing the air brings recognition

### Bay Area companies rank among EPA's best for commuters

By Pia Sarkar  
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Seven Bay Area companies have made it a little easier for everyone to breathe.

They are among the Environmental Protection Agency's top 20 Fortune 500 companies named as best workplaces for commuters.

Intel of Santa Clara tops the inaugural list, which the EPA officially released on Tuesday. It recognizes companies for efforts to unclog traffic and reduce air pollution by offering their employees incentives for carpooling, using public transportation and telecommuting from home.

Six other Bay Area companies made the EPA's list and of those, four are in

the top 10: Cisco Systems of San Jose (3); Sun Microsystems of Santa Clara (5); Oracle of Redwood City (6); and Advanced Micro Devices of Sunnyvale (7). Hewlett-Packard of Palo Alto and Apple Computer of Cupertino rank 11 and 12, respectively.

Each company has introduced its own way of easing commutes by providing discount passes for public transportation, lockers for cyclists or shuttle services.

"We're seeing this as a major benefit because it's saving fuel," said Suzanne Rudzinski, director of transportation and regional programs for the EPA's office of air and radiation. Not only that, company commuting programs have lowered greenhouse-gas emissions, air pollution and congestion on the roads.

Sixty-nine Fortune 500 companies nationwide have commuting programs ap-



LIZ HAFALIA / THE CHRONICLE

Rita Vanhauwenhuysse arrives at work at Hewlett-Packard in Palo Alto on a shuttle bus from the Caltrain station.

▼ As featured on the Business Section front page, September 29, 2004



proved by the EPA. Their efforts have led to annual reductions of 190,000 tons of carbon dioxide, 454 tons of volatile organic chemicals and 756 tons of nitrogen oxide. Nitrogen oxide and volatile organic chemicals are the two chemicals that make smog.

In the Bay Area, every little effort counts. Although not prone to smog, the region sees more than its share of traffic congestion. According to the most recent Urban Mobility Report put out by the Texas Transportation Institute and Texas A&M University, San Francisco and Oakland experienced the second-highest number of annual traffic delays per traveler in the country based on population, behind only Los Angeles.

The same report shows that annual delays during rush hour nationwide almost tripled between 1982 and 2002,

to 46 hours from 16 hours per traveler, even though transit usage is at an all-time high. Rudzinski attributed this to a significant increase in the number of cars on the road coupled with longer commutes.

Corwin Zechar of Albany, a senior member of Oracle's technology staff, lives about 30 miles from work. It takes him at least an hour and a half to get to the office by car, which is why he doesn't do it anymore.

"It was so painful," Zechar said.

Instead he receives a discount pass from Oracle to ride BART, then he jumps on a company-provided shuttle to Redwood City. According to Zechar's calculations, he is saving close to \$100 per month and using the down time on the train to nap or read.

Although Zechar said he would probably use alternative means to commute to work even if Oracle didn't offer incentives, it is good to have the company's backing.



**The Hewlett-Packard shuttle that picks up employees from the Caltrain station heads into the main office in Palo Alto.**

"Knowing the company is behind you, it's much more encouraging," he said.

To qualify for the EPA's designation as a best workplace for commuters, which is based on the availability of programs, not actual usage, several components must be in place. Companies must provide a central location for information on commuter benefits and communicate those benefits to employees. They must provide the actual benefits, such as access to emergency rides home, options like van pool service, a bus pass or \$30 subsidy for public transportation, or telecommuting.

Hewlett-Packard provides three subsidized van pools, commuter checks for \$40 to use public transit, and four shuttle services that take employees between train stops and the company's headquarters. It also provides free electric vehicle charging in five Cupertino stations and four Palo Alto stations. Use of those stations, however, has declined with more drivers switching to hybrid cars.

Jordan Boyd, manager of corporate services at Oracle's headquarters, said that he sees many employees taking advantage of his company's commuting benefits, which include shuttle services and preferred parking for carpoolers.

About 175 to 200 employees purchase discount transit passes through Oracle each month, out of about

7,000 employees at the Redwood City headquarters. About 684 carpoolers are registered in the company's parking program, a 27 percent increase from last year. And 191 employees use the 226 bike lockers that Oracle provides.

At Cisco, employees can receive eco-passes, which include free annual passes for light rail and buses in Santa Clara County. Mark Golan, vice president of worldwide real estate and workplace resources at Cisco, points out that the company also saves employees from hopping in their cars to run errands by offering on-site services including eight cafeterias, a fitness center, a dry cleaner and an ATM. There is also a child-care center and a selection of barbers and dentists all within walking distance of Cisco.

But even with such incentives, Golan admits that there is traffic congestion all around, especially on routes from Interstate 880 and Highway 237.

"It still remains an issue," he said.

With all the efforts that companies make, Golan added, the ultimate reduction in traffic and air pollution is up to the driver.

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## Easy commutes

The top 20 Fortune 500 companies rated best for commuters (Bay Area firms in bold):

1. Intel
2. Fannie Mae
3. **Cisco Systems**
4. USAA
5. **Sun Microsystems**
6. **Oracle**
7. **Advanced Micro Devices**
8. Texas Instruments
9. Safeco
10. EMC
11. **Hewlett-Packard**
12. **Apple Computer**
13. Devon Energy
14. Nike
15. Reliant Energy
16. IBM
17. Wyeth
18. WellPoint Health Networks
19. Dynegy
20. El Paso

Source: Environmental Protection Agency